



DUNSTON LODGE ASYLUM,

NEAR GATESHEAD, TYNE.

REPLY
TO
THE STATEMENTS
CONTAINED IN
A PAMPHLET AND LETTER
BY
DR. OLIVER, CARLISLE,
ON THE
EXPEDIENCY OF ERECTING
A Public Asylum for the Insane,
BELONGING TO THE
COUNTIES OF CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND.

BY J. E. WILKINSON.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:
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1842.

TO
EDWARD WILLIAMS HASELL, ESQ.,

CHAIRMAN OF THE QUARTER SESSIONS FOR THE COUNTIES
OF CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORELAND,

SIR,

MY attention has lately been called to a Pamphlet addressed to you, intituled "Suggestions as to the expediency of erecting a public Asylum for the Insane belonging to the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, by Richard Oliver, M. D.;" and also to a Letter, dated 23d May, from this gentleman, inserted in the *Carlisle Journal* of the 18th June last, in reference to the same subject.

I perfectly agree with many of the writer's observations in respect to the nature and general management of Lunatics, but I cannot allow his rather sweeping observations against private or licensed Asylums to pass unnoticed, and especially as applied to this neighbourhood in particular. I am not volunteering as the advocate of private Asylums either here or elsewhere, but I believe yourself and brother magistrates are perfectly aware that I have had confided to my care, for some years past, a considerable number of the patients suffering under this malady from the county of Cumberland, in consequence of which, I feel bound in justice to my own character and establishment, to submit to you in particular, and to the public generally, a statement of *facts* connected with my Asylum, which I trust

will be sufficiently convincing to every one, that I, at least, do not deserve the obloquy thrown upon licensed Houses, both in this neighbourhood and throughout the kingdom.

And first, in reference to the Pamphlet, I pass over, for the present, the author's statistical statements, as they either are, or ought to be, faithful transcripts of public documents, which I cannot for a moment suppose he would in any way distort either for or against any particular view of his own on this subject. However we shall see, by and by, how far those statements are borne out by facts, at least so far as they apply to me ; I shall therefore trouble you with quoting as briefly as possible those parts of the Pamphlet and Letter of which I now complain:—In page 7, the author says, “ that there were belonging to the different Unions in Cumberland, in 1834, only 19 patients lodged in Asylums, but in the beginning of the present year the number was 61.” He then asks “ how far the increase of accommodation may have kept pace with the demand for it thus generally created, I am not prepared to say ;” and further on, “ that treatment doubtless being generally *as good as circumstances will allow*,” &c. The same sort of objections are again repeated in the letter above referred to, but in much stronger terms ; in this letter the writer says, “ that private Asylums afford a *very inadequate provision* for the reception and proper treatment of poor Lunatics : that in the absence of any public provision for the reception and proper accommodation of such patients, *neglect and ill-treatment are much more common than is generally supposed* ;” and further, “ With respect to the unsuitableness of private institutions, *for any but the higher class of patients*, I believe that the observations contained in my former letter

will be fully borne out by all who are in any degree conversant with the subject " To substantiate this statement, the writer quotes a recommendation from the Visiting Committee of the Gloucester Asylum, who say not one word to the disparagement of private Asylums, but simply urge to seek rather the public than the private Asylum ; and, considering that their's is a public one, and probably very well managed, their recommendation is just what might be expected, the more especially as this building cost £44,457., and on reference to the Parliamentary return made in 1836, there was not at that time half the number of insane patients belonging the county in the Asylum, being only 104, whilst there were 126 in private Asylums, and under the care of parish officers, as in-door and out-door paupers ; considering, therefore, that the county had sunk an original capital of upwards of 400*l*. per head on the number of inmates at that time in the institution, besides paying 12*s*. per week for their maintenance, nothing could, as I said before, be more likely than such a recommendation, particularly as the establishment was properly managed. Now, although nothing can be more desirable than that the best means should everywhere be adopted for the safety, comfort, and recovery, of this unfortunate class, who become the objects of public charity under this misfortune, still due regard to economy ought always to be attended to in obtaining so desirable an object, and from my own experience of upwards of twenty years, I am pretty well aware of the cost of what constitutes the very best means ; but which, I must say in this instance of the County of Gloucester, however good in other respects, is anything but economical. The interest of a sunk capital of 400*l*. a-head is nearly 8*s*. a week, to-

gether with 12s. for maintenance, costs the county at the time referred to 1l. per week for each patient, being considerably more than double the charge that I have ever made for this class of patients from “the districts in question.”

In the Letter, Dr. Oliver says “on this subject it would be an easy matter to advance other evidence” (meaning that of Gloucester) “of not inferior importance, and not less so to bring forward proofs of the insufficiency of such accommodation as is provided for the poorer class of lunatics belonging to the districts in question, in the establishments to which they are usually consigned; in fact, nothing can be more obvious than the *impropriety* of placing such patients in situations which are *necessarily* unprovided with the most essential means for their proper management, and when I call your attention to the fact, that in the adjacent counties of Northumberland and Durham, the only accommodation to be met with is in licensed or private asylums, you will readily perceive that in those establishments, whatever may be the nature of their arrangements for the reception of affluent patients, *it is next to impossible*, that there can be any thing like a suitable provision for the poor.” As I said before, I am not addressing you as the advocate of private Asylums, further than my own is concerned, but as the proprietor of one in this neighbourhood which has hitherto had perhaps the largest share of patients from “the districts in question” “consigned” to me, I feel myself bound in common justice to my own character, to ask the writer what sort of evidence or proofs besides that of Gloucester, he has of the “insufficiency of accommodation for the poorer class of lunatics,” or how it can so readily be perceived, that in my establishment “*it is next to im-*

possible that there can be any thing like a suitable provision for the poor.” Really these are sweeping and very serious charges to make against any man, or set of men, and can only be justified by a thorough and complete knowledge of the perfect truth of what is so unequivocally asserted. The facts, however, of the per centage of recoveries and mortality in my establishment since its commencement 11 years ago, will enable both yourself and others to judge what degree of credit is to be attached to such statements, at least so far as they apply to me.

In the parliamentary returns to the House of Commons in 1836, statements were furnished from the following county Asylums, viz. :—

Cheshire,	for 7 years,	
Cornwall,	15	—
Dorsetshire,	4	—
Kent,.....	3	—
Lancashire,	19	—
Middlesex,	5	—
Norfolk,	22	—
Staffordshire,	5	—
Suffolk,.....	7	—
York, West Riding,	17	—

From which any person, taking the trouble of calculation, will find that the average annual per centage for the whole of these ten county Asylums is 15·56 cures and 9·06 deaths ; and as the writer of this Pamphlet and Letter has throughout so very strenuously insisted on the superior advantage of county Asylums for obtaining a larger per centage of cures and a less one of mortality, we shall see how far my own is inferior in either of those respects to the average of the whole of those ten very

excellent county institutions: for this purpose I submit, in the same form as they have done, a return of the inmates since my commencement :—

YEAR.	ADMITTED.	CURED.	DEAD.
1831	27	9	5
1832	20	10	3
1833	22	15	6
1834	21	9	4
1835	17	5	2
1836	19	17	3
1837	43	24	8
1838	33	29	9
1839	28	17	10
1840	32	23	4
1841	35	17	1

The result of this statement is an annual per centage of 27·1 cures and 9·2 deaths, being above 70 per cent. better in the recoveries, and within an extreme small fraction of the same mortality.

As my books are regularly registered in London, and are not only at all times open to the visiting magistrates, but to any other respectable person for a proper and legitimate purpose, the statement just made is, therefore, matter of comparative publicity, attested by the name and previous residence of every patient either admitted, cured, or dead. Having thus proved, I trust, to your entire satisfaction the total inapplicability of the insinuations in both Pamphlet and Letter to my Establishment, I may now be allowed

to say that I am not only charging the pauper patients from the “districts in question” at the moderate price of 8s. per week, but that for the last eleven years they have had over and above an advantage of full 70 per cent. more recoveries as compared with the ten very important county Asylums just referred to, and, at the same time, at no greater rate of mortality.

It has been urged that a distance from the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland is objectionable, but experience proves that patients who are removed entirely from home and friends have a very decided advantage in their recovery over those belonging to the more immediate neighbourhood.

Another objection urged against private Asylums is that the proprietors having a direct interest in keeping patients, even after they are partially or wholly recovered, it is, therefore, incompatible either with the welfare of the patient or the interest of those who support them, that they should be placed in such a situation ; but after the very large rate of cures just stated I feel satisfied that no one can urge this against my Establishment, for whatever may have been my interest, most certainly such has never been my practice. 70 per cent. recoveries over and above the average of 10 County Asylums I really think is a sufficient answer to such an objection as applied to me, even in the minds of the most sceptical. The results being as stated, go very far to prove that the means employed are well calculated to produce so desirable an end.—However it may not be improper to give you a brief outline of my general mode of treatment, accompanied by accurate plans of the Asylum,*

* A set of plans, on a large scale, are herewith submitted for the inspection of yourself and the other magistrates.

with all its convenience, airing grounds, and surrounding farm of 60 acres of arable and cultivated land ; from those plans you will readily perceive that every possible attention has been paid to arrangement for proper classification, ventilation, cleanliness, security, and comfort ; at the same time you will see the important facilities afforded by such an extent of adjoining land, where rural exercise and employment of all kinds are daily used by every patient to whom it can in any way prove beneficial. Both in the domestic and out-door arrangement every thing is done to divest the Establishment of all appearance of confinement or restraint ; indeed restraint is never used except on very particular occasions, either for their own safety or the protection of others, and so far from any one being “ *ill-used*,” as this Writer would have you to believe, I have not at this moment a single patient who is under any kind of restraint whatever, beyond a due precaution that they do not wander from the protection of the Asylum.

In the house as well as in the grounds the patients are allowed all sorts of rational amusements and harmless recreations, whilst every attention is paid to their moral and medical treatment, and for the satisfaction of their friends and relatives, as well as in justice to myself, it is only fair to state that they are in every respect as well fed and clothed, have as much unrestrained exercise, have the benefit of every convenient arrangement, and enjoy all the comforts that are to be met with in any County Asylum. In fact, the system so ably developed by Mr. Tuke, and so admirably practised both in the York Retreat and the York County Asylum, has been the only one which I have ever used. It was in the latter excellent Institution, where twenty-two years ago in my situation I first saw its great

advantages ; since that period I have continued to improve and carry it out with all the benefit which constant practice and experience can suggest and afford ; and the quotation given by the writer from the last annual report of the Visiting Committee of the Gloucester Asylum is nothing more than what any similar Committee would have given of the Asylum under my own management. As a proof of the good opinion entertained by the Visiting Magistrates for this Distriet, I may be allowed to give a Copy of the Minutes of their last visit, together with the Copy of a Letter from John W. Williamson, Esq., Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for this County, of whom I took the liberty of enquiring, and who has kindly favoured me with his opinion as to the propriety of my present notice of Dr. Oliver's Pamphlet and Letter.

“ At a meeting of the visitors of Mr. Wilkinson's Lunatic Asylum, Dunston Lodge, held at the Asylum, on the 7th March, 1842,

“ Present,

“ JOHN W. WILLIAMSON, Esq.

“ H. LAMB, Esq.

“ DARNELL BULMAN, Esq., M.D.

“ We find 69 patients in the Asylum, namely :—

“ Men probably curable,.....	9	} 41
“ Do. probably incurable, ...	32	
“ Women probably curable,	12	} 28
“ Do. Do. incurable,	16	

69

“ We find the Medical Journal and Weekly Statement regularly kept to the 3d instant. We find the Asylum

clean and in very good order. Mr. Wilkinson, since our last visit has completed one Department, forming one wing of the very extensive alterations and additions to his Asylum, mentioned in previous minutes. Twenty-two additional bed-rooms, three additional sitting-rooms, and one additional airing ground have been completed.

“Mr. Wilkinson contemplates other two additional wings, each of which will be as extensive as that which is finished, and when the whole is completed it will enable Mr. Wilkinson to make a perfect classification of his Patients, an object, we think, of great importance.

“Mr. Wilkinson purposes to apply at the ensuing Sessions for an addition of twenty-one to his present number, which will make his whole number ninety. We think his means of accommodation fully equal to that number, and that his application may be granted.

“Signed,

“J. W. WILLIAMSON,

“HUMBLE LAMB,

“DARNELL BULMAN, M. D.”

“*Whickham, September 13th, 1842.*

“SIR,

“You have requested my opinion of your reply to certain remarks in a Pamphlet referring to the Lunatic Asylums of this county.

“Without entering upon the relative merits of county or private Asylums, I must say that the severe observations in that writing do not apply to the Asylums in this neigh-

bourhood at present, whatever they may have done in former times, when the discipline of Lunatic Asylums was very different from what is now practised. I consider your reply perfectly just and correct. Your own establishment at Dunston Lodge I have known, I believe from its commencement, and can bear testimony to the uniform good order and regularity in the rooms, and the mildness of the treatment of patients themselves. These observations are founded upon personal inspection of the house, as a visiting justice. Had any cause of complaint arisen, as a magistrate living within a mile of you, I must have heard it, either by public report or from the relatives of the patient. I was so well convinced of the establishment being properly conducted that I willingly brought before the Sessions your application for an extended license. The extensive additions and judicious arrangements of the premises assure sufficient accommodation for the inmates. I have no doubt but that the same approbation of the public which has induced this extension of the establishment will continue to support it, if conducted with the same attention and success as heretofore.

“ I remain, SIR,

“ Your very obedient servant,

“ J. W. WILLIAMSON,

“ Chairman of Quarter Sessions.

“ Mr. Wilkinson, Dunston Lodge.”

In conclusion, permit me to make a slight reference to the expence of erecting county Asylums, and the cost of

maintaining their pauper Lunatics :—By a reference to the Parliamentary Returns made in 1834, it will be seen that 15 county Asylums cost 544,961*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.*, or, upon an average, 36,331*l.* each for building and furniture only ; also from the synoptic table prepared by Dr. Conolly in 1836, it appears that for 18 county Asylums the average sums sunk in building and furniture alone is 235*l.* per patient. The interest of which, at 5 per cent., is 4*s.* 6*d.* per week for each pauper Lunatic : and from the same return, the average weekly cost for these 15 county Asylums cannot be stated at less than 7*s.* a head, to which must be added 4*s.* 6*d.* for the interest of sunk capital, making 11*s.* 6*d.* as the very lowest weekly cost for every pauper Lunatic belonging to those 15 county Asylums. The truth of this data I believe no one will be disposed to question, at all events it is what the Legislature have received and acted upon as such ; and although it is not my business to enquire whether the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland can erect an Asylum and maintain their patients at a cheaper rate, yet it is my duty to show how far my charges agree with the cost already ascertained for 15 counties, and which, in all probability, would be about the same for Cumberland and Westmoreland—taking it, therefore, at 11*s.* 6*d.*, and mine at 8*s.* per head per week ; the saving to these two counties is nearly 44*l.* per cent. in the cost, and as shown before, 70 per cent. better in the recoveries.

I must apologise for troubling you at such length on this subject, but under the circumstances in which I am placed, I feel it to be a matter of the utmost importance that every thing should be fairly understood, so far as relates to this Asylum. I trust, therefore, you will kindly allow my ex-

cuse, which is simply this,—that for several years I have been so fortunate as to gain the good opinion and confidence of many very eminent medical gentlemen, together with that of several of the parochial authorities in the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, who have kindly intrusted a number of their patients to my care, and possessing a strong feeling that I had always done my best to justify this confidence, and that I did not in any way deserve the harsh expressions used, especially against the private Asylums of this neighbourhood, but which I am willing to suppose could have arisen in no other way as applied to me, than for want of knowing my establishment better, and in all other respects from unintentional mistake.

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient

And faithful servant,

JNO. E. WILKINSON.

Dunston Lodge, Sept. 15, 1842.

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